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An Open Letter from Bubo Virginianus



How do you do, my friends. Members of Audubon Societies are my friends, I know. That is why I am addressing this open letter to you. I have a grievance, and it shows in my face. I believe you can help me. Here is my story.

As you can see by my photograph I am a young Great Horned Owl. In the month of May, this year, I was misplaced by my mother. Fortunately for me, some Boy Scouts who have been trained to appreciate my kind, took me to Mr. "Bugs" Cain. He kept me at Boy Scout Headquarters for a month, feeding me rodents and liver, and allowing me to get my exercise each day. According to the custom of humans, he gave me a name—Fluffy, due no doubt to my downy breast-feathers. In fact, he went even a step further and called me Fluffy Ruffles. Much as I like Mr. Cain, I think he was assuming a lot to attach such a name to me. I doubt if he knows to this day my true sex.

I was much admired by the Boy Scouts. They liked particularly my strong talons and husky legs. They scoured the country for mice and rats to feed me, because they soon learned that what filet mignon is to the gourmand, a large rat is to the Horned Owl. One day Mr. Cain had a Mrs. Reynolds over to take a moving picture of me. I submitted good-naturedly to becoming an actor and allowed them to put me through all my tricks.

After I had been with Mr. Cain about a month, he took me over to the Reynolds home in Piedmont. It seems Mr. Cain had to spend the summer at the National Scout Summer Camp in New Mexico. The Reynolds were very good to me, with one exception. Unintentionally, no doubt, they upset my dignity terrifically. They gave me the horrible name of Toots. I heard Mrs. Reynolds say she couldn't think of any other name when I stared at her with my great round eyes. She also said I made her think of a chorus girl, especially when her daughter Ariel would amuse herself by pinning a red hair ribbon on my head.

For such a young bird, I have had quite a career. My life so far has been divided into a month here and a month there. The first of July Dr. Reynolds put me into the custody of Dr. and Mrs. T. O. Lake at Lafayette. I believe I had completely depleted the Piedmont supply of rodents, and I rebelled actively at anything else. The Lakes kept me in a commodious barn, which I liked very much. They seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of my favorite food. Fond as I am of the Lakes, I have to disclose that they have the typical human tendency of giving birds the most absurd names. They did not hesitate for an instant to re-name me. They went even further. They changed

my sex. They began at once to call me Eric. I am sure they knew no more about me, either, than Mr. Cain or the Reynolds.

Around the first of August Mrs. Reynolds brought Mr. Sumner out to see me. I soon learned why. He put a metal band on my leg, which it seems I will have to wear the rest of my life. That evening I was surprised to observe that the barn door had been left open. I decided that I would fly out of it and see what I could do with my wings, which were by that time quite strong. I easily flew to some tall trees in a neighboring pasture. By the following evening, I had worked up quite an appetite and decided that I would go back home for my dinner. I heard Mrs. Lake in the garden, so I gave her quite a shock when I swooped down upon her shoulder. She seemed to sense that I was hungry, so she sent in for some food. Apparently, she did not expect me, because instead of my favorite food, she gave me a veal chop. Being hungrier than I have ever been in my life, I accepted it. Since my friends seemed so pleased to see me and so eager to keep me supplied with food, I have returned each evening. Mrs. Lake goes out into the garden after sunset and calls "Eric, little fellow, come get your dinner!" I wait until she has repeated this a half dozen times, then I appear out of the night, touch lightly upon her shoulder and go to my table beside the swimming pool. She comes down with my dinner, talking happily to me, and I in turn utter owlish chatter, which she interprets as appreciation for her kindness. Perhaps I will soon outgrow this childish habit of taking food from human hands and go out into the world and forage for myself. But for the present, it is a pleasant and easy way of getting my meals.

Members of the Audubon Society, you have done an inestimable amount of good for me and my kind. Won't you do just one thing more? Please wage a campaign to get people to stop bestowing names that suit their fancy upon defenseless birds, without rhyme, reason or scientific fact. It is perfectly obvious that a male bird's personality can be completely ruined by the odious name of Toots. And so I beseech you, along with protection, let there be more study!

—By Bubo Virginianus

Per Laurel Reynolds, Piedmont, California

Photograph by Kathleen Dougan, Oakland, California

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A Doubly Mated Bluebird

It has seemed all right for female Phalaropes and female California Woodpeckers to attract or compel more than one male to help them with nesting activities, but for thrushes—no. At least so I thought until June of this year. On that day I was at Charlton Flats in the Mount Wilson region with Jim Murdock photographing a Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) nest in a down log. We were working at eight feet from an improvised blind so could easily see what was going on.

It dawned on us that most of the feeding was being done by the male bird, and we soon saw the answer. While one male was in the nest cavity a second male came in with food. He flew to perch beside the female on a telephone wire just above the nest and gave the worm to her. Being smart she swallowed the morsel. The motion pictures I got that day show one of the males leaving the nest as the other was entering.

If a reason needs to be supplied it may be this: It was in a highly developed picnic area of a National Forest. A thorough clean-up had been made by the C. C. C.; in fact, so thorough that we saw only three dead trees in three acres. Two were pine stubs about twenty feet high and one this down log. Each of the stubs housed four nesting pairs. One held nests of Flickers, Tree Swallows, Bluebirds, and Pygmy Nuthatches. The other, only twenty feet from the fallen log, held Flickers, Purple Martins, Bluebirds, and Pygmy Nuthatches. Now perhaps this shortage of sites produced this abnormal mating pattern in the Bluebirds.

—C. A. Harwell, Berkeley, California

An Important Report on Birds of Big Basin

Any person who watches birds in the coastal area between San Francisco and Monterey will want to consult the report on "A study of the birds of the Big Basin region of California". This account of the occurrence, distribution, and ecological relationships of 152 avian species in the Big Basin Region of the Santa Cruz Mountains and the area westward to the coast has just been published by Doctor Robert T. Orr, in the *American Midland Naturalist* (vol. 27, 1942, pp. 273-337). Beginning in 1935, 176 days were spent observing. Attention was directed to species rather than subspecies and most of the time was devoted to the common species rather than in searching for rarities. The result is an exceptionally valuable analysis of the place of birds in the biotic community and manual of distribution and occurrence of birds in the area. The work might well serve as a model for the working up of local studies needed for other sections of the San Francisco Bay Region.

—Jean M. Linsdale, Monterey County, California

August Field Trip

The August field trip was taken to the Chain of Lakes and vicinity in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, on August 16, under the leadership of Mr. A. H. Meyer. The weather was very favorable for birding and 30 species of birds were observed. The Black-throated Gray Warbler was seen. This bird is not very common in this region. The Belted Kingfisher posed very nicely on a bare limb so that everyone had a fine view of him.

The thirty species observed are as follows:

Pied-billed Grebe	Belted Kingfisher	Black-throated Gray
Hutchins Goose	Red-shafted Flicker	Warbler
Mallard	Hairy Woodpecker	Pileolated Warbler
Ruddy Duck	Black Phoebe	Brewer Blackbird
Quail	Western Flycatcher	Linnet
American Coot	Barn Swallow	Pine Siskin
Killdeer	Chickadee	Spotted Towhee
Northern Phalarope	Robin	Junco
Mourning Dove	Lutescent Warbler	White-crowned Sparrow
Anna Hummingbird	Yellow Warbler	Song Sparrow
Allen Hummingbird		

Members attending were: Mrs. Austin; Misses Young, Sterne, Webb, Werner, Roscoe; Messrs. Greiff, Weiss, Leffler, Meyer, and ten visitors.

—Mary L. Roscoe, Historian

Observations

The following observations have been reported:

Northern Phalaropes (600), San Mateo Bridge, July 21, Mrs. Harold C. Austin.

Barn Swallow feeding four young, Chain of Lakes, Golden Gate Park, June 27; Cliff Swallows (3), Bay near Van Ness Ave., June 27, San Francisco; Northern Phalaropes (10), Chain of Lakes, August 8—Mrs. Laura Stephens.

Mr. Joseph Webb reported from his place in Napa the following comparative data: Ash-throated Flycatcher: 1941 arrived April 27, 3 eggs in nesting box June 29, 3 young in nest July 11, off nest July 15, last seen Aug. 10; 1942 arrived April 26, 3 eggs in box June 14, 1 young in nest July 4, off nest July 18, last seen July 25. Western Flycatcher: 1941 arrived April 5, last seen July 28; 1942 arrived April 11, last seen July 27.

Birding at Dumbarton Bridge

Birds seen at Dumbarton Bridge on August 7 and 8, 1942, were not so numerous as those seen on about the same dates in 1940 and 1941. The salt in the ponds seemed more concentrated and the water at a lower level. The brine flies were not so plentiful. In fact, there were very few flies on the bridge pavement and consequently few Sandpipers feeding in front of the car. Species seen included 12 Eared Grebes (still had ear-tufts), 25 White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Snowy, Semipalmated, and Black-bellied Plovers, 24 Black Turnstones, Hudsonian Curlews, Willets, Godwits, Avocets,

Least and Western Sandpipers, several thousand Northern Phalaropes, Forster and Caspian Terns. On the mud flats toward Palo Alto there were 24 Long-billed Curlews, 4 Clapper Rails, and a scattering of species already mentioned.

—Junea W. Kelly, Alameda, California

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Audubon Notes

September Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 10th, at 8 p.m. in the Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.

Mr. Andrew Gibb of Berkeley will show his colored motion pictures of Pacific Coast birds under the title of "Bird Shots by an Amateur Photographer." Mr. Gibb has taken many of his pictures with a twelve-inch lens, thus catching his subjects at their best — entirely unaware of his presence.

Members may bring guests.

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September Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 20th (please note date) to Alameda to observe shore birds. Members and friends will meet at Liberty and Fernside at 11:45 a. m. We will eat luncheon on the beach at the foot of Liberty St. Those coming from San Francisco should take the "O" Santa Clara Ave. bus from the terminal, leaving there at 11 a. m., and ride to the end of the line, High and Santa Clara, and walk around Lincoln Park to the meeting place. Those coming from East Bay Points should take the Alameda bus No. 58 on Broadway, Oakland, anywhere between 22nd and 10th streets, and ride to High and Santa Clara. Leader, Junea W. Kelly.

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August Meeting: The 299th regular meeting was held on the 13th in the

Assembly Room of the San Francisco Public Library, President Mrs. Har-
old C. Austin presiding.

Dr. Alden H. Miller, Director of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California, gave an interesting account of his bird experiences while camping on the slopes of Glass Mountain, Mono County. The mountain is situated between the Sierras and White Mountains. Here is a meeting place of forms found on both sides of the Sierras. One particularly interesting specimen secured was the Rednaped Sapsucker. Dr. Miller had skins to illustrate his talk.

Under the heading of "Books", Mr. Harwell played on a phonograph one part of a transcribed lecture by Dr. Loye Miller, University of California, Los Angeles. The title is "Music in Nature". These records will be a great help, not only in learning bird and other animal calls, but in obtaining a better understanding of the meaning of these sounds. The records can be obtained from the University of California Press, Berkeley, and Los Angeles.

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It is with sorrow that we have learned of the death in New York on August 4th of Monique Nichols, wife of David G. Nichols, past president of our Association. Mrs. Nichols had many friends in the Bay region. We extend to Mr. Nichols our deepest sympathy.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Mrs. Harold C. Austin.....	541 Boulevard Way, Piedmont
Corresponding Secretary.....	Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....	519 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer.....	Miss Ivander Maciver.....	2414 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley
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Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 p.m.

Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.